

## Verb Agreement with Compound Subjects

### ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

**compound subject:** the subject of a sentence (who or what performs the action), made up of two or more parts joined by a conjunction, such as *and*, *or*, or *nor*

**number:** in grammar, whether a word refers to one or more than one—singular or plural

**singular:** referring to just one item

**plural:** referring to more than one items

**agreement:** the use of singular verbs for singular subjects and plural verbs for plural subjects; a compound subject may require a **singular or a plural verb** depending upon the conjunction used and the number of the subject part nearest the verb

### HERE'S HOW

**Step 1: Check the number of a compound subject.** Follow these rules to check the number of a compound subject. Choose a verb that agrees in number.

- If the parts of a compound subject are joined by ***and***, the subject **usually** takes a plural verb.

**EXAMPLE** Paula **and** Gary *like* summer best. (plural subject / plural verb)

- If the parts of a compound subject are joined by ***and***, but **both parts refer to one** person, thing, or idea, **as a single unit**, a singular verb should be used.

**EXAMPLE** The team's captain **and** starter *is* Jen. (singular subject / singular verb)

- When the parts of a compound subject are joined by ***or or nor***, the verb should agree with **the part closest to the verb**.

**EXAMPLE** Either Teesha or her brothers *use* the sled. (plural subject nearest verb)

**Step 2: Check verb agreement when you revise.** Pay special attention to subject-verb agreement when you revise your writing. If you change the order of compound subjects joined by ***or or nor***, you may need to change the verb so that it agrees with the part of the compound subject nearest the verb.

**EXAMPLE** *Original:* Practice or games *keep* the soccer team always busy.  
*Revision:* Games or practice *keeps* the soccer team always busy.